

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, November 8, 2006

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The Holland verdict: A system failed Ricky

Wednesday, November 08, 2006

With the climax of the Lisa Holland murder trial, it is now legally certain what had become obvious to any interested observer: Both Lisa and Tim Holland failed their 7-year-old adopted son Ricky in the most basic of all parental duties -- to protect your children. In fact, Lisa Holland engineered Ricky's torture and death while her husband stood mutely by. Rotting in prison is an appropriate punishment.

During the trials both of Lisa and her husband Tim (who pled guilty to second-degree murder earlier and agreed to testify against Lisa), it became clear that neither of these people should have been parents. When Ricky first disappeared from the Hollands' Williamston home, Tim and Lisa told police the boy had run away. That sparked a nine-day search, involving 1,700 volunteers and hundreds of law-enforcement officers.

Actually, Ricky likely died from brain injuries inflicted a week before he died. His parents chose not to seek medical attention, no doubt because questions would be asked. So Ricky died a slow death, unable to talk, eat or drink.

Eventually, his body was found in an Ingham County game area. Only then did Tim admit dumping his son's remains rather than following one of his wife's suggestions -- to feed Ricky to alligators.

How did two such abysmal human beings end up as Ricky's parents?

Originally, the Jackson County Department of Human Services placed little Ricky in the Holland home in 2000 after the couple applied to be foster parents. In 2003, the Hollands were allowed to adopt the boy. Yet documents obtained by a Detroit newspaper showed that there was little oversight. During nearly a two-year period, there was not one documented visit to the home.

In retrospect, there were points at which someone should have picked up on the Hollands' abusive home -- here in Jackson County and, when the Hollands moved to Williamston in May of 2005 in Ingham County as well.

In fact, someone did try to intervene at one point, but was rebuffed. That came out during a court hearing earlier this year. Carol Coxon, formerly a school nurse at Cascades Elementary School in Jackson, said she examined Ricky at the principal's request and found bruises on his shoulders, upper back and chest. She reported the injuries to Child Protective Services, which responded that the complaint did not warrant investigation. She said she filed at least two other reports as well.

Yet the system failed to respond -- until the boy disappeared for good. Then hundreds of people were concerned enough to act. Then all the bureaucratic officials began reviewing policies and procedures. Then the case took on political overtones and even developed into an issue in the 2006 gubernatorial campaign.

It doesn't matter to Ricky who was elected Tuesday in the governor's race. It no longer matters that his birth parents neglected him, his foster parents abused him and his adopted parents killed him. After all, Ricky is in a better place, where the judge of all who abuse children must ultimately find justice, or mercy.

But there is one thing that does still matter very much -- the quality of oversight of foster children and their homes by the agencies established for that purpose. We hope that in Jackson County, at least, the lessons of the Holland case have been learned, and appropriate changes made.

-- Jackson Citizen Patriot

Thursday: Election results

Published November 8, 2006
[From Lansing State Journal]

Wednesday's letters to the editor

Mourn Ricky

I just wanted to make a comment on the Tim and Lisa Holland case. Bottom line: This child is dead; he was abused and suffered at the hands of both parents and not protected by either - not even by the grandparent. Unthinkable.

At this point, it doesn't matter who made the ultimate blow to end this child's life. The fact of the matter is, the parents and apparently the grandfather knew and begged for his return, knowing all along that he was dead.

Enough time has passed, far too much, to allow him to have a proper burial. People who didn't even know little Ricky Holland have mourned for him.

Deborah L Forcier

Laingsburg



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Published November 8, 2006

Man found guilty of killing toddler

Detective: Verdict vindication for abused 2-year-old

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

What's next

- Samuel Courtland - who was found guilty Tuesday of first-degree felony murder, as well as first- and second-degree child abuse - is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 13 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

For the second time in two weeks, authorities say they have found justice for a child killed by an adult caregiver.

A jury on Tuesday found Samuel Courtland guilty of killing his former girlfriend's 2-year-old son, Jalyn Daniel. He will spend the rest of his life in prison.

The 32-year-old Lansing man was convicted of first-degree felony murder and first-degree child abuse in the May 2005 death of Jalyn. He also was found guilty of second-degree child abuse for beating Jalyn's 8-year-old brother.

A jury of nine women and three men reached the verdict after deliberating for about three hours.

Jalyn's mother, 31-year-old Cynthia Daniel of Lansing, who was once charged as a co-defendant, pleaded guilty in September to involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse. She faces between three and 15 years in prison, prosecutors have said.

Courtland's attorney, Peter Samouris, said in court it was Daniel who committed the abuse. He said Daniel lied and tried to shift the blame to his client.

"She is the mother. She's in control," Samouris said, referring to Daniel.

Courtland's friends and family members refused to comment after the verdict.

Repeated abuse

Lansing police Detective Bruce Holliday, who along with Detective Vicki Dahlke, spent 10 months investigating Jalyn's death, said the verdict was vindication for the 2-year-old boy.

"No child should have to die that way," Holliday said.

Courtland whipped Jalyn with a belt, poured boiling water on his feet, repeatedly beat an already injured hand and burned the imprint of a household iron into his skin, prosecutors said. Daniel, prosecutors added, allowed it to happen.

Medical experts testified Jalyn died from complications of pneumonia caused by blunt force trauma.

The second-degree child abuse charge stemmed from accusations that Courtland hung Daniel's 8-year-old son from a hook on the basement stairs and whipped him, according to testimony.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III, whose office's work led to the Oct. 27 conviction of Lisa Holland for killing her 7-year-old son, Ricky, said prosecuting child abuse cases takes an emotional toll.

"I don't think people realize how difficult it is to try these kinds of cases ... just the subject matter we have to deal with," he said.

Assistant Prosecutor Lisa McCormick, one of two attorneys who worked on the trial, said: "It makes you want to go home and hug your kids."

'Injury upon injury'

Jalyn suffered repeated beatings, Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino said in his closing arguments, leaving most of his body bruised.

"This child was beaten to a pulp," Crino said.

Referring to the testimony of a forensic pathologist, Crino said, "It was injury upon injury upon injury."

Crino said Jalyn had "fresh, hemorrhaging injuries" that, according to the forensic pathologist, occurred 24 to 48 hours before he died.

Witness to the abuse

Courtland was alone with Jalyn as well as Daniel's other two sons within that time frame, according to testimony.

Daniel and a friend went to a Mt. Pleasant casino the night of May 12, 2005, leaving Courtland to care for the children.

Jalyn died May 14.

Daniel's 12-year-old son described listening to Jalyn that night crying in the kitchen, as Courtland whipped him with what he thought was a belt.

"Smack. Smack. Smack," Crino said, pounding his fist in a palm.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.



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Published November 7, 2006

With toddler badly beaten, mom smoked pot

Woman testifies she hosted friends as boy, 2, lay dying

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

Samuel Courtland's former girlfriend testified Monday he convinced her not to take her badly beaten and burned 2-year-old son to the hospital, just days before the boy died.

Cynthia Daniel also testified that as her son Jalyn lay dying in May 2005, she and Courtland smoked marijuana and hosted friends at their home.

Courtland, 32, of Lansing, is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of Daniel's son. Medical experts have said the child died from complications of pneumonia brought on by blunt force trauma.

Daniel, 31, already has pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse in connection with Jalyn's May 2005 death. She faces between three years and 15 years in prison, prosecutors said.

On the stand Monday, wearing a yellow jail uniform with her wrists shackled, Daniel described her son's condition in the days before his death, saying he had severe burns on both feet, crushed bones in one hand, abrasions on his torso and difficulty breathing.

"I didn't know how bad (the injuries) were," she told Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino.

Daniel testified that in the early morning of May 13, 2005, one day before Jalyn died, she returned from a casino and Jalyn's condition was so bad that she wanted to take him to the hospital. She said Courtland, who had been watching Jalyn that night, told her not to, because if authorities saw the injuries they would take her kids away and arrest her for child abuse.

Courtland's attorney, Peter Samouris, focused on how Daniel lied during at least two interviews with police - in May 2005 and March 2006.

She admitted trying to portray herself as a good parent, even though she never told anyone, including her mother and sisters, that Courtland was abusing her children.

"I lied because I was trying to protect myself," Daniel said.

On the afternoon and night of May 13, as Jalyn's condition became so bad he couldn't stand up on his own, Cynthia Daniel smoked large amounts of marijuana with Courtland, she testified.

The day Jalyn died, Daniel admitted smoking more marijuana as Jalyn lay in his bed, struggling to

breathe. She also hosted a gathering of friends at her Grovenburg Road duplex.

Daniel at one point claimed she never saw Jalyn naked in the weeks before his death, when he likely would have displayed several injuries.

Daniel said Courtland moved in with her a few weeks after they started dating in February 2005. She said he often would be alone with Jalyn.

In April 2005, she testified, Courtland claimed blistering and third-degree burns on Jalyn's feet happened after Jalyn somehow burned himself with a household iron.

Courtland, who she said punished Jalyn at times by whipping him with a belt, told her no one would believe it was an accident.

"Sam said they would take my kids," Daniel testified.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

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Published November 7, 2006

Courtland to spend life in prison for killing 2-year-old boy

Midday update

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

Sam Courtland is guilty of first-degree felony murder in the death of his former girlfriend's 2-year-old son, a jury found has ruled.

Courtland, 32, of Lansing, was charged with murder and child abuse in the death of Jalyn Daniel. The jury also found him guilty of first- and second-degree child abuse.

Courtland will be sentenced Dec. 13. The mandatory punishment for felony murder is life in prison without parole.

When Jalyn was taken to the emergency room in May 2005, he had burn marks on his feet, crushed bones in one hand and the imprint of a iron on his back and buttocks.

Medical experts said the boy died from complications of pneumonia brought on by blunt force trauma.

The boy's mother, 31-year-old Cynthia Daniel, already has pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse in connection with Jalyn's May 2005 death.

Read more about this story in Wednesday's Lansing State Journal.

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Couple Charged With First Degree Child Abuse

Nov 7, 2006 05:17 PM EST

(TV5) -- A Fenton Township couple is in jail after dropping the woman's two-and-half-year-old daughter off at the hospital and trying to run away.

Genesee County Sheriff says the couple dropped the girl off at Genesys and tried to run away from the hospital, but a nurse flagged down a nearby deputy.

The little girl was burned with cigarettes over her chest and abdomen and had dozens of other wounds all over her body. Doctors reportedly had to drill a hole in the girl's head to relieve pressure from a head wound. They found a total of 47 different injuries on the girl.

The suspects, 18-year-old Jessica Lake and her boyfriend, 21-year-old Christopher Rowand, are being charged with First Degree Child Abuse. The girl has been on life support for 3 days as of November 7th. If she dies, the couple could face Murder Charges.



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Toddler's abuse sickens officials

FENTON TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 07, 2006

By Kim Crawford

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A Fenton Township woman and her boyfriend, who police said tried to leave her critically injured 2 1/2-year-old daughter at a hospital and flee Friday night, have been charged with first-degree child abuse, the Genesee County sheriff and county prosecutor said Monday.

"This is a terrible, terrible case," said Sheriff Robert J. Pickell. "It's the worst case of child abuse I've seen in the eight years I've been here."

The child - who had at least 47 different wounds and injuries, including head trauma and cigarette burns and may have been sexually abused - is in "very critical condition on life support" at Hurley Medical Center, Pickell said.

Prosecutor David Leyton said his office issued warrants on Saturday charging the toddler's mother, Jessica A. Lake, 18, and her boyfriend, Christopher L. Rowand, 21, with child abuse.

They were arraigned in the Genesee County Jail on Sunday by Mt. Morris District Magistrate Roberta Wray, who ordered them held without bond.

A sheriff's department paramedic arrested Lake and Rowand on Friday night at Genesys Regional Medical Center in Grand Blanc Township after they dropped off the little girl and attempted to flee, Pickell said.

The paramedic was there taking a report in another matter when a hospital employee ran up to say a badly beaten child had been brought in, and the couple that had left the child was leaving.

Pickell said the pair was arrested at the scene.

Because of the child's severe injuries, she was transported to Hurley's pediatric intensive care unit. Pickell said the little girl underwent surgery to relieve pressure from the swelling of her brain due to a blow to the head.

If the child doesn't survive, Leyton said he would bring murder charges against the couple.

Leyton said the girl is so severely injured that she cannot be moved, so investigators don't yet know the complete nature of her injuries.

Lake and Rowand face a preliminary examination on the child abuse charge within two weeks in Central District Court. Rowand is not the child's father, the authorities said. Rowand has a previous conviction for theft, but Lake has no prior record.

Pickell said his investigators don't believe Lake had ever come to the attention of state child protection caseworkers.

Pickell and Leyton urged people not to hesitate in reporting suspected child abuse to authorities, whether to 911 dispatchers, the state's child protective services, or the sheriff's department dispatchers at (810) 257-3422.

"We have to do a better job," Leyton said about the community's responsibility to help stop child abuse.



Toddler's death an accident, police say

Monday, November 06, 2006

By Scott Hagen

shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A 14-month-old girl being walked up the stairs of a Jackson home by a 3-year-old died Saturday morning after losing her footing and falling.

City police are treating the tragedy as an accident and said this morning they won't file charges against the boyfriend of the child's mother. He was baby-sitting A'jayia McCormick at the time of the accident.

"This was a terrible accident, and our hearts go out to the family," said Jackson Police Lt. Aaron Kantor.

A'jayia and siblings were visiting the house in the 1200 block of Laurel Lane. She was from Albion.

The mother's 29-year-old boyfriend was baby-sitting five children and was in another room when A'jayia fell down the stairs, Kantor said.

Officers and medical personnel arrived at the house at 11:19 a.m. and attempted to revive the baby. She was declared dead at Foote Hospital.

Police first investigated the death as suspicious, Kantor said.

"Any time we have an infant death we take all necessary steps to ensure there was no foul play," Kantor said.

Police notified Children's Protective Services as part of the investigation, but children were not removed from the family, Kantor said.

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Muskegon Chronicle

Child molester gets 30 to 90 years in prison

Tuesday, November 07, 2006

By John S. Hausman

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A 34-year-old Twin Lake-area man -- once the foster child of an older pedophile, later his domestic and business partner and fellow child molester -- has been sentenced to prison for between 30 and 90 years.

Gregory Alan Thompson got that sentence this morning from 14th Circuit Judge James M. Graves Jr. Thompson pleaded guilty Oct. 17 to two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and was sentenced as a habitual offender.

In March 2005, Gregory Thompson and Daniel Adam Thompson, now 54, of Cedar Creek Township were charged with the same two counts, accused of sexually assaulting a young boy who lived with them for more than a year.

Daniel Thompson later pleaded no contest as charged and in May 2005 was sentenced to prison for between 30 and 90 years. He is now an inmate at Carson City Correctional Facility.

Gregory Thompson was extradited in June to Michigan after serving a sentence in Nevada for a probation violation stemming from unrelated property-crime convictions. On the new prison sentence, he received jail credit only for the 159 days he has spent in Muskegon's jail since his extradition.

The Thompsons are not blood relations. Gregory Thompson was originally the older man's foster child and later became his domestic partner, changing his last name from Johnson. Both referred to themselves as a "married couple" during past police interviews.

The victim in this case was a boy whose mother left him with the Thompsons. She allowed her son, who had behavioral problems, to live with the two men because she knew Daniel Thompson and knew he was a former foster parent and mentor to troubled boys.

Authorities say Gregory and Daniel Thompson bought the then-12-year-old victim and his younger brother gifts, including bicycles and video games. Both men molested the victim, including sexual intercourse, between May 2003 and September 2004, according to court papers.

"This defendant held himself out as a member of the community, trying to be a model citizen, where in reality he was performing acts on this minor victim and possibly others," Assistant Prosecutor Marc E. Curtis told the judge before sentencing.

The Thompsons have owned or managed several businesses in the Muskegon area.

At one time they managed the apartment building at 297 W. Clay in downtown Muskegon. In 1993, they bought the former Airline and Bruce motels in Muskegon Heights, renaming their venture Willow Tree Inn. By Labor Day 1997, when both buildings burned down, the Thompsons no longer owned them.

In 2002, the two men opened two restaurants, called Two Buckaroo's Cafe, on Lakeshore Drive and at Getty Street and Laketon Avenue. The restaurants later closed.

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November 8, 2006

MySpace sex case prompts Internet parental warning

West Bloomfield man, 22, charged with having sex with 14-year-old girl he met on the Internet.

Charles E. Ramirez / The Detroit News

SHELBY TOWNSHIP -- Macomb County's top cop warned parents Tuesday about the potential dangers their children face on the Internet after a 22-year-old man was charged with having sex with an underage girl he met on the popular MySpace.com Web site.

"A lot of people don't think that it could happen to them or that their kids could be involved because they don't understand the Internet," said Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel.

"This is just the latest example that it is happening."

Hackel frequently speaks to parents about the subject in seminars.

"The Internet is a great thing, but there are dangers," he said. "You can't leave your kids alone and unsupervised in chat rooms or on MySpace."

His comments come a day after Peter Kennedy, 22, of West Bloomfield was charged with having sex with a 14-year-old girl in Shelby Township.

Police are not disclosing the girl's identity because of her age.

"He apparently had contacted the girl days before through MySpace.com," said Sgt. Stan Muscynski of the Shelby Township Police Department's Detective Bureau.

Kennedy was arraigned Monday before Magistrate Michael Osaer in the 41-A District Court in Shelby Township on a first-degree criminal sexual conduct charge. Kennedy faces up to life in prison for the charge.

Osaer set bond at \$250,000 bond. Kennedy remained in police custody Tuesday at the Macomb County Jail.

Kennedy's attorney, Bloomfield Hills-based Elias Muawad, said the girl voluntarily left her home and met with his client and is now claiming forced sexual conduct.

"Force is the key thing here," he said. "My client also believed the girl was 16 because of statements she made to him."

The girl may have also told Kennedy she was 16 in exchanges they had over the Internet, Muawad said.

"I'm hoping she doesn't ruin this young man's life and tells the truth about (giving her consent)," he said.

A preliminary exam for Kennedy is scheduled for Nov. 20 before District Judge Douglas Shepherd.

Kennedy was arrested after a police officer on patrol found him engaged in sex with the girl in a car at about 3 a.m. Sunday, said Muscynski.

The car was in a parking lot in the 24 Mile and Van Dyke area, he said.

The incident is the latest this year in Michigan that involved the use of MySpace.com, which allows 72 million users to post photos, swap comments and link up.

In May, a 25-year-old Indiana man got into trouble with the law after arranging a rendezvous with a 13-year-old Harrison Township girl who lied about her age. Authorities stopped the man and the girl in Jackson after an Amber Alert was issued.

The man was later freed after officials decided he didn't commit a crime by driving the girl across the state.

The following month, a 17-year-old Wyoming man drove to West Branch to pick up a 12-year-old girl after contacting her through the Web site.

Hackel said parents have to know what sites their kids are visiting and who they're talking to on them.

"It's impossible for the police to police the Internet," he said.

You can reach Charles E. Ramirez at (586) 468-2905 or cramirez@detnews.com.

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Man charged with internet sex crime

Policewoman poses as 14-year-old girl

PUBLISHED: November 8, 2006

By Frank DeFrank
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Police charged a 20-year-old man Tuesday with using the Internet to try to solicit sex with a minor.

Justin Ryan Jones of White Lake Township faces five felony charges: two counts of child sexually abusive activity; two counts of using a computer to commit a felony; and one count of accosting a child for immoral purposes.

He was arrested Monday after he showed up to meet who he thought was a 14-year-old girl, police said. Jones is scheduled for formal arraignment today at Clinton Township's 41-B District Court.

Police said Jones initiated an Internet "chat" with whom he believed to be a teenage girl. During the online conversation, Jones and the "girl" agreed to meet at an undisclosed location for sex.

But the "girl" was actually a member of the Macomb County Sheriff Department's Macomb Area Computer Enforcement team posing as a teenager. When he showed up for the meeting, officers from the unit and uniformed deputy sheriffs arrested Jones.

The MACE unit was created specifically to ferret out online sexual predators.

Jones' arrest was the second this week that involved an adult man using a computer to solicit sex from an underage girl.

Shelby Township police charged Peter Kennedy, 22, of West Bloomfield, with first-degree criminal sexual conduct after an officer caught him and a 14-year-old girl engaged in sex while parked in vehicle last weekend, police said.

Police said Kennedy and the girl made contact through an Internet chat line.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/110806/loc_sexcharge001.shtml

The Detroit News

November 8, 2006

Wayne briefs

Inkster

Man gets up to 10 years for sex, AIDS charges

A 37-year-old man was sentenced to a maximum of 10 years on charges of failing to notify a sex partner he had AIDS and using a computer to commit a crime. Circuit Judge Timothy M. Kenny sentenced Stephen Foster to four to 10 years in prison for his crimes. Foster pleaded no contest to the charges after he was arrested in August during an Internet sting operation. He admitted to sheriff's deputies that he had AIDS. Federal privacy laws prevent authorities from disclosing whether Foster's 15-year-old partner contracted the virus that causes AIDS.

LEGALLY SPEAKING

by Amanda Roggenbuck

This month I decided to write about an issue near and dear to my heart: the representation of abused and neglected children. Did you know that children brought into the legal system because of allegations of abuse or neglect are granted legal counsel?



The Michigan Compiled laws at MCL 712A.17d define what a Lawyer-guardian ad litem's (LGAL) duties are in representing a child. This portion of the law also requires the LGALs to meet with the child before certain court proceedings, and keep the child up-to-date on the progress of the case. The LGAL is also required to investigate the case independently of other agencies or attorneys. Further, they must meet with the child to ascertain their position, but to ultimately advocate for what they believe is in the child's best interest - even if it is not the most popular or easiest position to advocate. LGALs are also required to monitor case plan implementation, and request authorization from the court to pursue interests of the child not generally included in the current appointment.

A LGAL must identify when they are seeking resolutions for the child that are inconsistent with the child's wishes, in which case another attorney may be appointed to represent those opposing interests. Additionally, the LGAL must advocate independent of other parties and counsel.

LGALs are charged with representing the best interest of these most vulnerable citizens. Most people are unaware such a service is provided to children. This service is one way that attorneys help their community. We serve as a legal voice and advocate for a child in a system that can fail to recognize that children are people with needs, thoughts and feelings. I encourage everyone to become educated on this issue - abuse and neglect is on the rise nationwide.

As sad as it sounds, this is a vital service; it is vital to our community and more importantly, our children. This service must be protected and recognized. It is scary to think that there is a task force at the state level to address child welfare and justice. I welcome your questions and comments as always. For more information on this topic, I encourage you to contact your state and local officials and to utilize the Internet to research LGALs in the state of Michigan.

Amanda Roggenbuck can be reached at her Cass City office at 989-872-8881, with office hours Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. You may also visit her Web site at www.amandaroggenbuckandassociates.com. Amanda would be happy to answer your questions in this column, and will address them as space allows. Please send your questions to editor@lakeshoreguardian.com or by mail to The Lakeshore Guardian, 9697 Purdy Road, Harbor Beach, MI 48441.

Worrying about the least of these**by Jack Lessenberry****11/8/2006**

Well, the election is over, and I can say that once again, it came out exactly the way I thought it would. Except, that is, for one state legislative seat in North Carolina, and I am confident the recount there will vindicate me.

Truthfully, however, lest any comparisons be made with any sportswriters living or dead, let me confess I am writing this before the votes have been counted, and haven't a clue. Next week we'll consider what the results mean, and whether we should reinforce our bunkers when the newly elected take over.

But today, while you do know the results, you are doubtless sick of all the candidates anyway, yours as well as theirs. So what I'd like to ask you to do is think about some folks whom nobody talks about much at all.

They are the thousands of kids who, every year, fall through the cracks of our foster care system. No, I'm not talking about the Ricky Hollands, who are tortured and murdered by the people to whom they are given by the state.

The newspapers, to their credit — especially the *Detroit Free Press* — have written about these kids.

Sometimes I worry people will think that now that Ricky's slimeball parents are in the slam, the foster care problem is essentially solved. What concerns me are the kids who have reasonably good experiences, or at least aren't starved, beaten or raped. What the papers should be writing more about is what happens to these kids when they "age out" of the system.

That is, they are never adopted; they reach their 18th birthday, and that's it. Their foster parents are no longer being paid to care for them; they say good-bye, and the "official adults" are left on their own, usually without any money, family or other support structure to speak of. How do these kids do?

How would you think they do? Pretty badly. I have one friend who was in a situation like that, and actually made it. I probably would have ended up dead or worse, and so would you, and for that matter, so would Dick DeVos.

Every year, there are about 450 foster care kids in Michigan who age out of the system. Earlier this fall, we learned a lot about what happens to them. That's thanks to a new report from a task force co-chaired by Maura Corrigan, the chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, and Marianne Udow, head of the Michigan Department of Human Services. This year, the department sensibly had them convene a group to study what happens to former foster kids. (You can find and read the report at michigan.gov or call 517-373-7394 for a copy.)

To the extent statistics exist, they are grim. Nationwide, four years after "aging out" of foster care, fewer than half the former clients had graduated from high school. One-quarter of them had been homeless. One out of every four of the young men had spent time in jail. Two out of every five former foster care kids were already parents themselves. (Imagine what prospects most of their children are likely to have.)

Unemployment among these former foster kids is, naturally, appalling. There is some evidence that conditions in Michigan may be even worse than average. A study Wayne State University did this year of "aged out" youths in Wayne County found that those who did work made, on average, \$5,400 a year. Nearly half of all the Wayne County kids had been homeless and more than half were on some form of public assistance.

During the campaign, neither candidate for governor did anything I saw to indicate the slightest interest in these kids, or even the ticking time bomb they represent in our society: a growing corps of desperate people without hope.

Fortunately, the state task force came up with a number of sensible recommendations. Some of these can be automatically enacted; others will need legislative approval. They include letting young "adults" stay in foster care longer, and providing for expanded and improved summer training, educational and financial aid programs. They also suggest expanded and lengthened medical and dental care coverage to these kids, who always lacked what so many others take for granted.

Yes, I can already hear the legislators of at least one party squawking that this will cost money. Of course it would. Not nearly as much, however, as the social and financial cost of putting hundreds of people with no hope on our streets.

But you would have to have the ability to see beyond the next year's budget to figure that out. Taking care of our young people is an issue like that, an issue, in fact, sort of like global warming. (Hint.)

Curious bit of sexism: For weeks, desperate Republicans have bleated that they needed to keep control of the House of Representatives to save the nation from having Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House. They've done their damndest to demonize her as a scary, shrill, far-left bitch from hell.

To my mild amazement, this character assassination has gone virtually unchallenged by the sleepwalking national media. In fact, you'd think the media should be going nuts touting Pelosi, the Democrats' first-ever female congressional leader, especially if she is going to be speaker.

Pelosi is clearly smart and savvy; she'd have to be, to get to the top in the male-dominated world of Washington. Not to mention that she is reasonably attractive, always a plus in a world dominated by television.

Don't be surprised if she actually proves to be far more politically skilled than expected, doesn't try to nationalize our toothbrushes, and develops a following of her own. She is, after all, an Italian-American grandmother still on her first marriage, with no track record of e-mails to young boys.

Speaking of which, something nearly as mysterious is why the Democrats — and the irreverent media — didn't do more to satirize the current speaker. The embarrassing Dennis Hastert is a grossly fat man who walks like he is determined to prove that man really did evolve from the ape, and that he himself isn't too sure about whether he supports the transition. Barely articulate, shuffling and dim, Hastert has been the weakest speaker in at least a century.

There is a reason for that; he was never meant to be the real speaker at all. Hastert was merely supposed to be the errand boy and front man for Tom DeLay. Once Darth Vader was indicted and had to resign, Hastert was rudderless, taking what clues he could from the Bush White House.

The man who played House speaker on TV clearly didn't have a clue what to do when he was warned one of his tribe was salivating over teenage boys. One might almost wonder if it evoked nostalgic memories of Hastert's days as a high school wrestling coach. Someday, if we are lucky, and the planet isn't destroyed first, and if there is still fresh air and water, your children may ask you what the hell was wrong with the American people in the Bush era.

Please write if you figure out an answer.

Jack Lessenberry opines weekly for *Metro Times*. Contact him at letters@metrotimes.com.



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Published November 8, 2006

Proposed homeless shelter raises concerns, police say

W. Saginaw address not a site 'we would've recommended'

By Tom Lambert
Lansing State Journal

Amy Ramos said she was "on the fence" about whether the building at W. 516 Saginaw St. is a good place for a proposed homeless shelter.

She may be the only one who's unsure.

North Lansing neighbors and police say the project's new use will be a haven for drugs and other illicit activity.

Homeless advocates say give the project a chance.

"I understand the need for a program like this," said Ramos, the owner of Amy's Catering, of the establishment that could soon open near her business.

"But I guess I am a 'Not In My Back Yard Person,' too. I could see the downfall in the area if these people end up having too much time on their hands."

The Greater Lansing Housing Coalition is expected to enter into a partnership with the Great Lakes Capital Fund to co-own 516 W. Saginaw St. by the end of the year. The goal is to provide shelter for up to 23 homeless people.

The facility currently houses about a dozen low-income residents.

Police and others living in north Lansing say that the neighborhood isn't the best place for the



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
Give it a chance: Amy Ramos, of Amy's Catering on West Saginaw Street, has mixed feelings about a proposed shelter for the homeless near her business. She's ready to give it a chance. Other neighbors and police have raised objections to the facility. The building at 516 W. Saginaw St. is slated to become a shelter for 23 homeless people.

Mayor approves funds

Mayor Virg Bernero recently approved \$100,000 to fund homeless day services at the Volunteers of America's New Hope Day Center, Volunteer of America officials said.

The funding, managed by the Human Relations and Community Services Department, is targeted to ensure homeless services when the temperatures drop to dangerous levels in the winter months.

The Day Center is located at 430 North Larch St.

Bernero and the eight-member City Council have maintained support for the community safety net and provided further leadership to secure long term funding, Volunteer of America officials said.

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chronically homeless, many of whom have substance abuse and psychological problems, to call home.

"The availability of drugs is a concern for a population that is struggling with substance abuse," said police Capt. Ray Hall.

Over the last seven years, police have made drug arrests at that address and also have responded to calls for vehicles being stolen, shots fired and assaults, Hall said.

"We have made significant progress as far as crime goes in this area, but it's still an issue. This would not have been a site we would've recommended," he said.

However, Lynne Martinez, interim executive director of the coalition, disagreed.

"The risk is much greater if they don't have a place to stay," said Martinez, who added that a manager will be hired to supervise the people who will live in the building.

"We are offering a high quality place to live with supportive services."

Martinez said 516 W. Saginaw St. was the only building considered for the project because Great Lakes Cap Fund, Michigan State Housing Development Authority and the Lansing Area Homeless Resolution Network approached the coalition about using it.

Martinez said the building should be ready by early next year, but she was unsure of an exact timetable.

"It's a good place for people to have affordable housing with support from social service agencies," said Tom Edmiston, regional president of the Great Lakes Capital Fund.

Still, area residents and business owners have mixed feelings about the plan.

Ramos said she would likely side with letting it go through, and then see the results.

"We will never know until we try," she said.

But Colleen Beeman, who has lived on the nearby North Sycamore Street for about 20 years, said it's a risk the area can't take.

"Why would you take a person who comes from this environment and put them back in it?" she said.

"It just doesn't make any sense at all."

Contact Tom Lambert at 377-1063 or tlambert@lsj.com.



THE BAY CITY TIMES

Bay County juvenile home drug program has run out of money

Tuesday, November 07, 2006

By RYAN J. STANTON

TIMES WRITER

She's not sure on how the problems started, but she does know how they ended.

The Bay County woman's sons, "Michael" and "George," wound up in the Bay County Juvenile Home - for stealing cars, smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol and breaking into places they shouldn't have been.

"This was an ongoing thing for a couple of years," said the distressed mother, who asked to remain anonymous. "It was a nightmare."

Fortunately, this family's story has a happy ending. Michael and George - now 16 and 17 - are substance-free, off probation and plan on enrolling in night school in January.

But their mother worries other families may not know the same success, because substance abuse treatment has been canceled at the county-operated juvenile home, located in Hampton Township.

The Bay County Board of Commissioners nixed the treatment program on Oct. 10 by ending a contract with nonprofit provider Kairos Health Care. Leaders cited a lack of funds for the decision.

County leaders say they're now trying to fix the problem and bring back services.

"The need for substance abuse help for these kids still is there," said County Executive Thomas L. Hickner.

The mother of Michael and George hopes county leaders make good on their word, because the juvenile home program was the only route that worked for her sons.

After court-ordered, out-patient treatment programs failed - "it never worked, they would take off and then they wouldn't be around for the appointment" - the mother said she witnessed her sons grow through the 30-day juvenile home program. At the juvenile home, at separate times, both boys kept journals, sat through counseling sessions and learned why they were resorting to drug use.

"I think it helped the whole family," said the mother.

Hickner said he's been in talks with Bay-Arenac Behavioral Health Authority, and there may be hope of offering services - through a new provider - if both parties agree to direct state liquor tax dollars toward the juvenile home.

The county already allocates those dollars - earmarked for substance abuse treatment - annually to Behavioral Health Authority, last year in the amount of \$197,000. Hickner is hoping some or all of those dollars can find their way into the juvenile home, even if it means reprogramming dollars that aid adults.

"The good news is, they do think they'll be able to provide the services," he said.

The county's juvenile home treatment program started on July 5, 2004. Services stopped Aug. 31.

One purpose of the program was to increase occupancy at the juvenile home - partly by increasing the number of youths coming in from other counties. That's a money-maker for Bay County, and it helped offset costs of the program for a while, Hickner said, though the numbers dropped off and the program was no

longer paying for itself.

"The first year it operated, it not only paid for itself, it actually generated income for the facility," he said.

Marge Marchlewicz, Bay County's probate and juvenile court administrator, said "there's absolutely a need" to have substance abuse treatment inside the juvenile home.

"A good percentage of the youth who come into juvenile court are using substances, and of that, there's a good 20 percent who are probably addicted already," she said.

The county is continuing to court-order youths into out-patient programs. However, Marchlewicz said, most youths don't embrace the idea of getting help and need to be in a secured setting without outside distractions.

"That was the beauty of the juvenile home program," she said, adding that it was one of few programs like it in the state.

The Bay County Juvenile Home underwent major renovations in the 1990s, which included the addition of a 12-bed north wing. The idea was that Bay County would accept more juvenile offenders from other counties, and bring in revenue.

After some success, Saginaw County expanded its juvenile facility, and Midland County built a detention center of its own. With demand shrinking, Bay County decided to close its north wing two years ago - only to later use it for the substance abuse program.

Once again, the north wing is shut down.

A supervisor at the juvenile home declined to comment for this story, saying all inquiries have to go through Hickner.

The juvenile home has gone several months without a director since Tom Tonkavich retired this year. Hickner said the county has received more than 100 applications, interviewed a dozen candidates and plans to hire a new director soon.

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Adrian Daily Telegram

November 7, 2006

Domestic assault

MADISON TWP. — Police were called Friday to investigate a violent assault upon a 25-year-old Adrian woman by her 18-year-old boyfriend, according to a report released Monday by the Michigan State Police.

The woman was admitted to Bixby Medical Center in Adrian with internal injuries as well as cuts and bruises to her head, face, neck, arms, hands, torso and knee, police said. Troopers and Adrian police were unable to locate the suspect during the weekend.

According to the report, the victim and her boyfriend argued the night before, and she stayed overnight with a friend. At 2:30 p.m. Friday she went to the house she shared with her boyfriend to pick up her things to leave him, and he was there.

When she went into the bedroom, he followed her, locked the door and starting punching her, alternately saying he was going to break her jaw or ribs or kill her. She fell on the bed, and he picked her up and threw her on the floor. He stopped to tell her he loved her, then started punching and kicking her again, saying he hated her, police said.

When someone knocked on the front door, he knocked her down again and went to the door. She told a trooper she then ran for the back door — leaving her 1-year-old daughter behind — and ran to a neighbor's house with him chasing after her. The neighbor called 911 then went to get the victim's daughter, police said. The victim was taken to Bixby by Madison Charter Township Fire Department ambulance. The victim's mother picked up the girl.

Police looked for the suspect at a few locations suggested by the victim, according to the report. They found his vehicle at a residence on East Maumee Street, but were told it had been dropped off by one of the suspect's friends. They checked at another residence on West Beecher Street and found another man wanted by the Adrian Police Department, but not the suspect. They were told the suspect had been there earlier in the evening.

The victim told police they rarely argued before, but that the suspect had been angry the night before.

Tuesday, November 7, 2006 8:40 AM EST

Building sign delayed

ADRIAN — A decision on ordering a permanent sign to guide visitors to government offices inside the Lenawee County Human Services Building was put off Monday because the Michigan Department of Human Services is unwilling to help pay for it.

“It’s irritating. They rent the building but they won’t pay their share of the costs,” said Lenawee County administrator Bill Bacon during a meeting of the county commission’s physical resources committee.

A temporary directional sign was put up at the building months ago to solve problems with visitors finding the offices they want. County officials reported the temporary sign has seemed to work well. The largest government agency in the building, however, has not agreed to help pay for a permanent sign.

“It’s kind of ironic. They changed their name to match our building name,” said Tom MacNaughton, director of the county’s department on aging. The former Family Independence Agency was renamed the Department of Human Services by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

Bacon said the state has paid for signs on U.S. 223 directing people to the office building on South Winter Street, but is unwilling to spend anything on a sign at the building itself. Commissioners agreed to contact Lansing about the sign issue before deciding whether to order a permanent sign leaving out the Department of Human Services.



Letters for November 7

Tuesday, November 07, 2006

Put DHS in old Rogers building

A new Department of Human Services (DHS) facility has once again been proposed. Although a new building may be necessary, we can recycle an existing one to meet Kent County's current and future needs. Daily I drive 28th Street through the city of Wyoming and notice the former Rogers Department store sitting vacant. It appears that the building is more than adequate to meet the required 126,000 square feet deemed necessary.

Additionally, enough parking spaces are available, negating any on-street parking as in the Franklin Street Campus proposal. It is in close proximity to U.S. 131, M-6 and Int. 96. It is on a major thoroughfare with bus service available. There is supporting retailers and restaurants in the immediate area. Employees would be spared the Grand Rapids city income tax, providing more take-home earnings. Other county or state services could be housed there saving further lease expense. A subsequent benefit would be the Secretary of State Office located across the street in Rogers Plaza for those in need of a state ID card.

This is very similar to the old City Center in Grand Rapids which has been successfully recycled. I am hopeful that before taxpayers are committed to constructing a new

\$27 million building, this logical suggestion would be embraced, pursued and discussed, as it appears to be a win-win proposal for employees, clients and taxpayers!

- JERRY WRIGHT/Wyoming



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Karen Stock (517) 373-7394

17,000 R.E.A.D.Y. kits distributed free to child care providers

November 8, 2006

LANSING – To help boost infant and toddlers' development and literacy skills, the Department of Human Services and Early Childhood Investment Corporation distributed 17,000 R.E.A.D.Y. kits free to providers caring for children under the age of 30 months.

The kits, called Read, Educate and Develop Youth or R.E.A.D.Y., provide important information about child development and brain growth, with a special emphasis on language and literacy skills for young children. Each kit contains a combination of visual, audio and written materials for learning activities that help children succeed beginning at birth.

"Learning begins the moment a child is born," said Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow. "These kits help caregivers nurture and develop a young child's natural curiosity with tools that make learning fun. This investment in our children's future will pay large dividends when they reach school ready to learn."

Caregivers at child care centers, group homes, and family homes, and day care aides and relative care providers who care for children under the age of 30 months will receive the kits. Funding for distribution of these kits was earmarked from the Child Care and Development Fund.

Child care providers who have not received a free kit or who would like to order additional kits, may call (800) 214-8961. Additional information about the kits or on-line orders can be located at www.emc.cmich.edu/READY

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs